

Who is the Father of Modern Dentistry? The answer depends on whom you ask.

Some references say Pierre Fauchard deserves the honor. Born in 1678 in the French province of Brittany, Fauchard was the author of *Le chirurgien dentiste; ou, traite des dents (The Surgeon-Dentist, or, Treatise on the Teeth)*. This two-volume, 863-page textbook became the era's most important reference on dentistry, and it remained so for the next 100 years. According to *Dentistry: An Illustrated History*, by Malvin E. Ring, D.D.S., "Many of the ideas and procedures he advocated or described are still current today, two and a half centuries later!"

Fauchard is credited with a number of accomplishments, including:

- Identifying that tooth decay was not caused by toothworms, as previously believed.
- Detailing dental anatomy and tooth anomalies.
- Explaining how to replant teeth that had been accidentally knocked out, and how to transplant teeth from one person to another.
- Emphasizing preventive dentistry and preventive care, especially the importance of taking care of one's teeth to avoid future problems.
- Detailing how to remove caries from teeth and fill cavities.
- Heralding a new era of patient comfort and dignity by advocating that the patient be seated in an armchair when undergoing a dental procedure, instead of lying on the floor, grasping the dentist's leg.

As impressive as Fauchard's accomplishments were, other references says the real Father of Modern Dentistry is Greene Vardiman Black, who was born in Scott County, Illinois, in 1836. Dr. Black never had much formal education (about 20 months of elementary school by some estimates), but he became a learned physician and dentist, and in 1897 became dean of the Northwestern University Dental School. Visitors to the National Museum of American History can see a replica of Dr. Black's operating room, circa 1885, on display, according to *Dentistry: An Illustrated History*.

Dr. Black became an accomplished dental researcher. When he wanted to know why gold foil fillings lost their cohesiveness over time, he taught himself chemistry to find out. According to *Dentistry: An Illustrated History*. It noted that Dr. Black "did more to standardize operative procedures than any dentist before or since," and he developed the mixture of amalgam that many dentists still use today - 67% silver, 27% tin, 5% copper and 1% zinc.

Both Fauchard and Black made significant contributions to the practice of modern dentistry